

"You feel almost as though you were at the original inquiry in New York. By using the words of the very people who were involved, the cast of five wrings more compassion, anguish and controversy out of the disaster than any dramatic adaptation."

- Southampton Daily Echo

41N

50W

Based on the
1912 TITANIC
US SENATE HEARINGS

Adapted & Written by
Robert Neal Marshall

"Very impressive. A play that gives voice to tragedy and human nature."

- Cunard Commodore (ret)
Ronald W. Warwick

Executive Summary

TITLE: 41N 50W

LENGTH: 80 Minutes

GENRE: Dramatic Play/Possible Film
Historical Docudrama

BUDGET: \$TBD

Production: 2024/2025

Logline

Only days after TITANIC foundered near her last reported position of 41 North 50 West, a US Senate Inquiry was held in New York to determine causes of the disaster. TITANIC legacy has endured over 110 years with tales of sacrifice and human tragedy. Experience the rare actual words and stories as spoken on the stand by stunned TITANIC survivors and close witnesses.

Synopsis

Pre-show scrim displays a vintage map of the North Atlantic, showing Newfoundland, Halifax, and marked position of RMS Titanic at coordinates 41N 50W. As play starts, images project onto the scrim. Throughout the play original photographs of these historic characters are projected as are images of Titanic, other vessels involved and real-life visuals. Vintage black and white photos of just eyes appear. They are faded, yet piercing, overlapping each other as they dissolve and change.

A distant haunting melody plays softly, taking us to another time and place. These eyes are witnesses to not only life, but unknown details, love, emotions, horrors. These images now fill the stage, expanding to show the full faces now of men, women and children. They are elegant, weary, austere. Voices come in, sharing brief introductions to these characters and their individual experiences: A Captain of a rescue ship describing the early morning scene upon arrival at 41N 50W, a wireless operator explaining emergency codes, a frustrated officer unable to communicate with contact Titanic, a representative from the White Star Line sending rail cars to Halifax for displaced passengers, introductions from crew members to brief observations by passengers. ***These are their actual words.***

Visual montage of the White Star Liner TITANIC graces the stage, sharing her brief lifetime from construction and launch, to her maiden voyage ending tragically in the cold dark sea. Throughout the play original images of the real-life historic characters are projected, as are images of Titanic, other vessels involved, and referenced elements from testimony.

A narrator announces the start in the US Senate “of an investigation into the causes leading to the Wreck of the White Star Liner Titanic.” This Narrator takes on the role of Lead Senator, William Alden Smith, from Michigan. It is his duty to speak “for those who no longer can.”

Mr. Philip A.S. Franklin, Vice president of the International Mercantile Marine Company which owns the White Star Line, is awakened in the middle of the night. Something has happened to Titanic that cannot be confirmed. He must carefully navigate around press reports that could mislead or alarm. Senator Smith presses Franklin regarding any false messages received from Titanic indicating that she was safe and heading to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Captain Haddock, of Titanic’s sister ship Olympic, shares his conversations with wireless operator, E.J. Moore, trying to confirm if it was indeed Titanic that reported hitting an iceberg and if they were putting off passengers. Olympic did not receive any messages from home office White Star representatives until the next morning. Several ships alerted to incident report making their way to last reported position of Titanic.

Synopsis

Second Class passenger and survivor, Mrs. Lutie Parrish, complains to Senator Smith and the committee about her small and cold accommodations on Titanic. When asked directly about remembering the ship's collision with an iceberg, Mrs. Parrish prefers to continue her grievances about her cabin.

Titanic Second Mate, Herbert Lightoller, recounts his conversations with Captain Smith and the need to proceed slowly in calm, slightly hazy ice filled waters. Captain Rostron, of the Carpathia which would be the first and only ship to rescue passengers, describes his routine departure from New York two days earlier. Carpathia Wireless Operator, Harold Thomas Cottam, explains how there are no rigid rules of when he is to be at his station. He is employed by the Marconi Wireless Company, not the shipping line. Nor are there specific guidelines regarding emergency transmissions. For quite some time earlier he was overwhelmed transferring wireless messages on behalf of Titanic. Trying to confirm a potential distress call, he said all Titanic replied was "Come At Once!"

Captain Stanley Lord of the nearby SS Californian is irritated having to answer questions from Senator Smith regarding various wireless communications and sea conditions that night. Lord says his wireless operator was asleep and missed the distress calls from Titanic. Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the wireless radio, is asked by Senator Smith if he attempted to keep his operators quiet after the incident as a means to gain exclusive access to sell their story to the press. He admits that if offered payment he would take it. Passenger Mrs. J. Stuart White describes spending most of her time in her cabin being supported by her maid and manservant. She remembers the rumbling of the ship [underscore sound effects] as Titanic hit the iceberg. Although vague when first asked about her location, when pressed she knew exactly which lifeboat she entered.

White Star Line's A. S. Franklin tries to gain more information from several other ships in the area. He consistently receives rumors that Titanic is still heading to Halifax. As newspaper front pages are projected on the stage, reporters read out a variety of mistaken and misinformed headlines saying that all were safe.

Franklin engages with Mr. Benjamin Campbell from the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad about sending trains up to Halifax to bring back all 1,300 passengers from Titanic. Mr. Campbell asks if the rail company should bill the passengers for fares and meals or if White Star Line will pay. Franklin says he has to "think about it."

Synopsis

Ernest Gill, Second Donkeyman on the nearby Californian, says he saw rockets fired from deck and thought “that must be a vessel in distress.” He defends his position that it was not his job to notify the bridge or lookouts as “they should have seen the same thing.” He admits thinking at the time it may have been Titanic.

Titanic officers describe the process of starting to get passengers into crowded lifeboats. Mrs. Lutie Parrish felt most passengers thought it was safer to stay on the large ship rather than board small lifeboats. Captain Rostron, from Carpathia, receives confirmation that Titanic is in serious trouble. He takes immediate action to head towards the ship in a rescue operation. He orders his crew to start preparing all lifeboats, gangways, ladders and ropes to be ready receive passengers. Frank Oliver Evans, Able Seaman on Titanic, describes how they navigated a lifeboat with a collapsible boat in tow. There were mostly women and a few children crammed into the boat and they passed around a bottle of whiskey. Evans confirms a large “fleshy” man died in the process and Evans that it took about 20 minutes once they sighted the Carpathia until they came alongside the rescue ship.

Captain Rostron sees a flare at 2:40AM, thinking Titanic was still afloat. Racing to the scene, Carpathia stops engines at 4AM at the scene of the disaster. They take up the first lifeboat at 4:10AM. From seeing first signal of distress, it took Carpathia three and a half hours to reach the site of Titanic. Californian Captain Lord admits that once they realized the urgency of the situation at 6:30AM it only took two and a half hours to reach 41N 50W. Not seeing much wreckage on the surface, he comments that it looked like only “an old fishing boat had sunk.” Californian then circles for a short period of time before proceeding on their course. When Senator Smith asks about ice, Captain Lord responds that they were “surrounded by ice.”

Captain James Henry Moore, Master of the steamship Mount Temple, shares they were 49 miles from Titanic caught on the opposite side of a large ice flow. When asked if he found any wreckage or floating corpses, he indicated that after arriving at 41N 50W there was no evidence of the disaster. He had no idea from what he saw that Titanic had sunk.

Senator Smith speculates with Mr. Moore that relatives have asked if the Government might send divers to the ship, not knowing how far she is below the surface. Based on Moore’s testimony, the absence of bodies might indicate they were still enclosed somewhere within the ship.

Synopsis

American Writer, amateur historian, and real estate investor Colonel Archibald Gracie IV jokes about collecting ice that fell on the deck as a souvenir. After going back to his cabin to pack his luggage, for later recovery once the ship was rescued, he sees J. Bruce Ismay, Managing Director of the White Star Line, on deck “looking very self contained” giving the impression that matters were not that serious.

At 4PM after the rescue Captain Rostron from the Carpathia held a short prayer service and burial at sea for those that were lost. He sends transmission to the Olympic that they were returning to New York with survivors, a few who had been in 30 degree water. He indicates that Mr. Ismay was on board and “under opiate.” He makes a firm case that there was “no use in Olympic coming to the Carpathia because they could render absolutely no assistance.” Further, that it is “undesirable” for the passengers from Titanic to see an identical sister ship so soon after.

Mrs. Mahala D. Douglas has lost her husband in the disaster and struggles with emotion. When able to proceed she talks of the lovely initial departure and how luxurious Titanic was. She comments on strange crew practices she and her husband observed, such as checking water temperature from a tap, versus testing actual sea water. Titanic surviving crewman Frank Oliver Evans describes how they helped bring passengers onboard Carpathia and how many icebergs were around. Captain Rostron from Carpathia sends a message to the company via Olympic that there is no hope searching for Titanic. He confirms Titanic foundered at 2:20AM. They can account for 675 souls saved out of 2,208 passengers and crew.

Mr. Franklin makes an announcement to the press confirming that Titanic foundered. He gets as far as “at 2 o’clock am” when “there was not a reporter left in the room” as they shot off to telephone the news. He cancels the rail equipment that was beginning to head towards Halifax. J. Bruce Ismay requests that he may be excused from these hearings based on family obligations and as a separate hearing has started in the United Kingdom. Senator Smith pushes him for answers, in particular, regarding the shortage of lifeboats that may have saved more people. Californian wireless operator Cyril Evans defends going to sleep and complains that he was told to “shut up” by Titanic wireless operators earlier that evening due a volume of messages they had to send and interference from Californian transmission signals.

Mr. Lightoller is asked what time he left the ship after assisting passengers into lifeboats. “I didn’t leave it” he replies. “Titanic left me.” Ismay asserts he knew nothing of icebergs and that he did not see the ship go down as he was rowing. When asked, he confirms that the ship did not break in two.

Synopsis

Against the sounds of explosions and rushing water, Mrs. J. Stuart White describes what she saw as a “finer body of men in the passengers.” She complains of dining room stewards taking smoking in lifeboats “at a time like this.” She cannot fathom on how such an unbearable tragedy and loss of life could happen.

Mr. Harold Bride, Wireless Operator on Titanic, is pressed by Senator Smith as to why he did not respond to certain ships in the area who questioned the seriousness of Titanic’s distress calls. With anger and frustration, he emphasizes that other ships should have understood the urgency. No matter the language of the operators, all should know the meaning of a C.Q.D. emergency call. Frederick M. Sammis, Chief engineer of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co., is pressed about offers received by their wireless operators from the press for their exclusive story with a high fee. He defends the company, and that Mr. Marconi felt “the boys should be allowed to sell their story.”

Archibald Gracie vividly describes being lifted by a wave on deck and grabbing onto a railing as Titanic goes under. In darkness, we hear the horrific sounds of Titanic sinking - loud metal scraping against metal followed by multiple explosions with a building roar. Our ensemble of characters stare up at the ship in horror as if from lifeboats watching as she goes down. White Star Director J. Bruce Ismay turns his head away. Colonel Gracie describes how he was pulled under the surface for a distance, but swam back up, at first seeing nothing. He is then overwhelmed by the horrible sounds of drowning people gasping for breath as he was surrounded by bodies. Sinking sounds eventually die down and the only sound left that of drowning souls which slowly fades.

Mrs. J. Stuart White criticizes comments others have made about the valiant bravery of the men that night. She points out that “there wasn’t any particular bravery” because “none of the men thought it was going down. If they had thought the ship was going down, they would not have frivoleed as they did.”

Mr. Franklin makes it clear everyone thought the ship was unsinkable. He defensively asks how anyone can be blamed when every precaution had been taken. Captain Rostron of the Carpathia knew he had to take a risk and that it was the right thing to do. Captain Lord of the Californian could only comment “It was a very deceiving night.”

Synopsis

In summary comments, our ensemble draw the story to a conclusion sharing some of the long-lasting effects experienced, the sorrow and unexpressed deep anguish. The question is raised “If this was the best of discipline which prevailed, what would have been disorder?” Others describe sitting by in lifeboats listening to the horrific cries of the dying “until the noise quieted down.” It is pointed out that Captain Lord of the Californian was closer than any other ship and could have saved all the lives, however he and his crew took no action. On the other hand, Captain Rostron of the Carpathia drove into peril and has left the people of the World his debtor. His good deeds should be remembered through all time.

In concluding remarks, Senator William Alden Smith insists “this should be the occasion for a new birth of vigilance, and future generations must accord to this event a crowning motive for better things so that tomorrow, and 100 years forth, such arrogance, ignorance or neglect shall never again allow such a tragedy to happen.” Our Narrator, who also plays Senator Smith, turns to the audience and describes his personal struggling navigating through dark slanted hallways of a vessel, surprisingly adding the sounds of a helicopter roaring outside. He describes joining other passengers as they lower themselves into inflatable rubber rafts. A montage of modern maritime disasters after Titanic project on the stage in stills and film. Of special note are the Lusitania torpedo sinking, the Normandie capsized in Manhattan, the Andrea Doria sinking and the Oceanos disappearing off the coast of South Africa, ending on the dramatic images of the Costa Concordia on its side.

This reveals that the character acting as Narrator and playing Senator Smith is a survivor of the ill-fated Costa Concordia, one hundred years later, ripped open exactly like Titanic. Tragic and unnecessary. Have we learned anything from this historic tragedy? Our Narrator/Senator Smith turns to look at the shattering photo of the Concordia projected on the scrim behind him. The image dissolves into the news images of the Submersible TITAN sharing the tragic news of the disaster with headlines of history repeating. With a shake of his head, he turns to exit. Fade to Black.

Quotes

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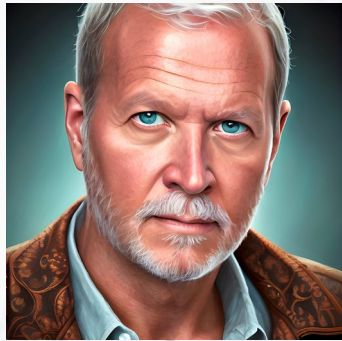
- Southampton Daily Echo

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- Cunard Commodore (ret) Ronald W. Warwick

“The whole production was electric and the performances kept one spell bound from beginning to end” – Christopher & Janet Pickard (Relative of TITANIC victim William Hipkins)

Creative



Robert Neal Marshall – Playwright/Adaptation

With a BFA in film from New York University, Marshall worked with late producer Richard Armitage on several hit West End shows, including ME AND MY GIRL (and on Broadway) with Robert Lindsay and Emma Thompson, HIGH SOCIETY with Natasha Richardson, THE ENTERTAINER with Peter Bowles, and Rowan Atkinson's one man show A NEW REVUE.

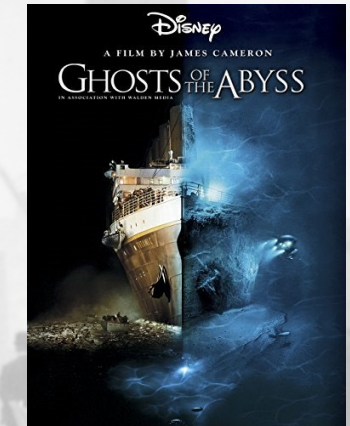
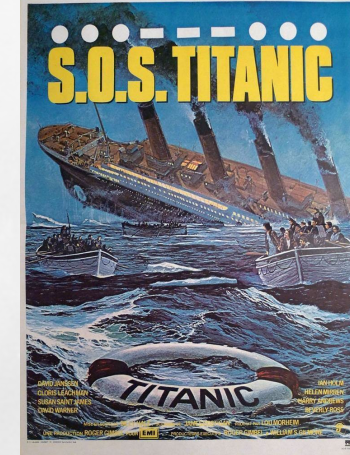
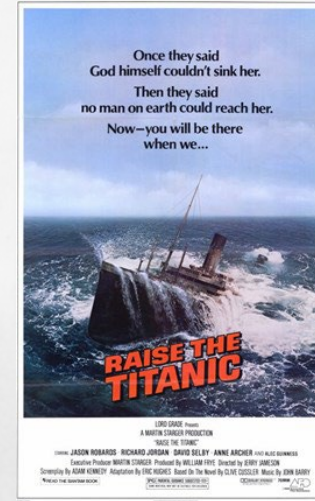
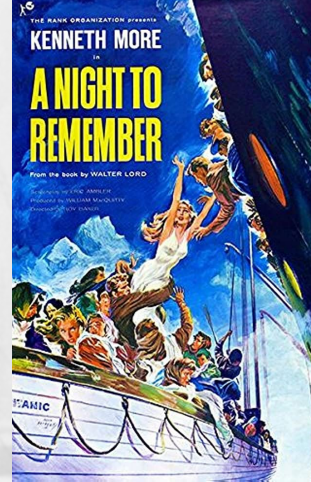
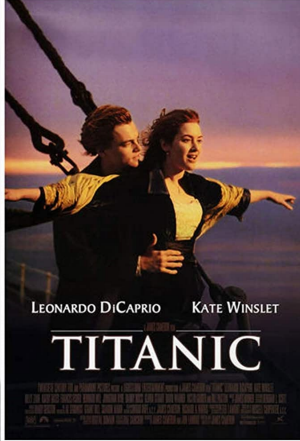
Marshall independently produced and directed the successful West End debut of the Craig Carnelia musical "IS THERE LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?" at the Donmar Warehouse. Robert produced and directed several workshop productions as well as the critically acclaimed Edinburgh Fringe Festival production of his musical adaptation RUMPELSTILTSKIN'S DAUGHTER currently under development for a musical feature film. His other musical, Passionate Heart, was commissioned as part of the GRACE Heritage Film Festival Gala in Washington, DC.

As Casting Associate with Pat Moran, C.S.A (HAIRSPRAY, THE WIRE) Robert was a proud member of the team to win a 2012 Emmy Award for casting GAME CHANGE starring Julianne Moore and a Emmy Nomination for casting Season one of VEEP starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus, both on HBO. His documentary MR OCEAN LINER about maritime expert Bill Miller premiered on board Cunard's Queen Mary 2 and screened at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center at Lincoln Center. Other projects include producing *After All* starring Tony Nominated actress Anita Gillette and a new one man play Drinking Up The Pieces written and performed by Marc Unger and directed by Rain Pryor, and Tour Manager for Rain Pryor's Off-Broadway hit FRIED CHICKEN & LATKES.

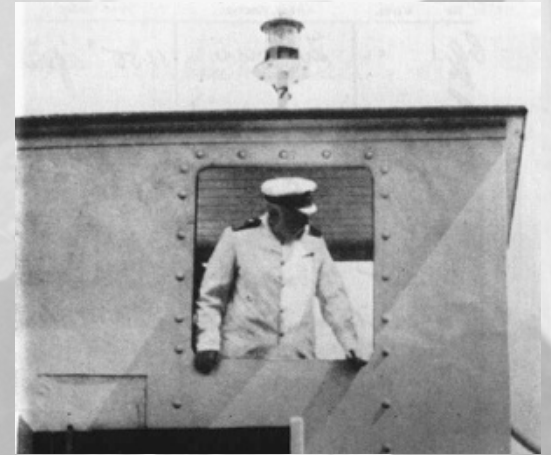
Marshall, an actor himself and a member of Actors' Equity, SAG-AFTRA, and The Dramatists Guild of America, was also a member of the prestigious Lincoln Center Theater Directors' Lab. As a regular Guest Speaker, Marshall lectures on board the Queen Mary 2 and Queen Elizabeth as part of the award winning Cunard Insights® Enrichment Programme.

41N 50W, has had a special "pre-season" showcase in London, England at the new St. James Theatre Studio prior to a limited run at the Seacity Museum in Southampton UK and is currently in development for a new production.

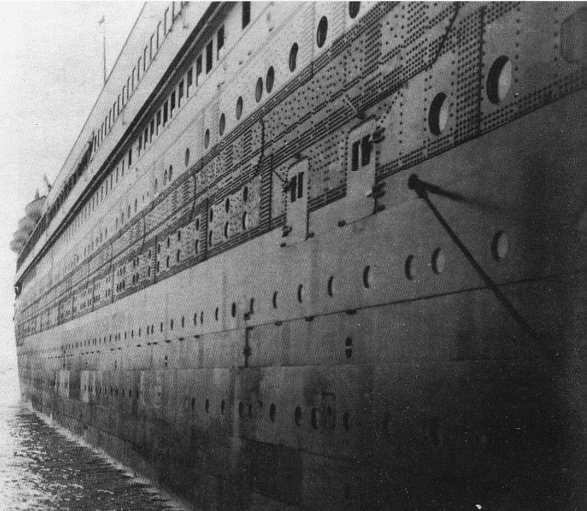
Comps – Popular Titanic Titles



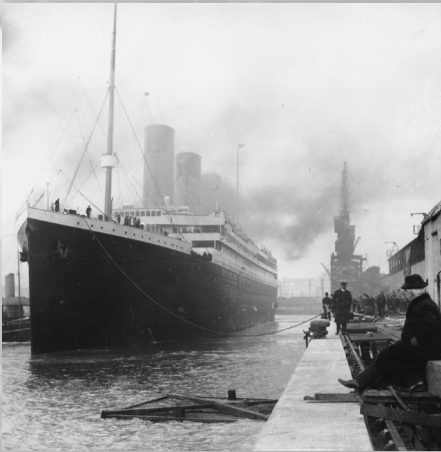
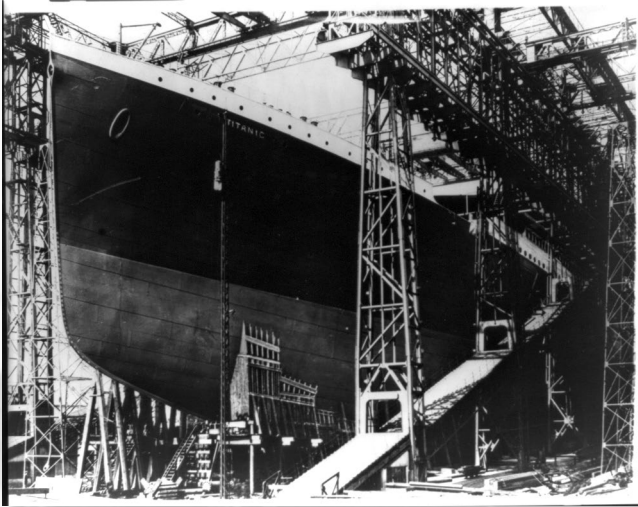
Concept Images



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A New Play

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Contact

RNM PRODUCTIONS

Robert Neal Marshall

RobertNealMarshall2@gmail.com

410-984-0225